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ADDRESS

OF

DEMOCRATIC MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

TO THE

DEMOCRACY OF THE UNITED STATES.

FELLOW-CITIZENS:

The perilous condition of the country demands that we should counsel together. Party organization, restricted within proper limits, is a positive good, and indeed essential to the preservation of public liberty. Without it the best Government would soon degenerate into the worst of tyrannies. In despotisms the chief use of power is in crushing out party opposition. In our own country the experience of the last twelve months proves, more than any lesson in history, the necessity of party organization. The present Administration was chosen by a party, and in all civil acts and appointments has recognized, and still does, its fealty and obligations to that party. There must and will be an opposition. The public safety and good demand it. Shall it be a new organization or an old one? The Democratic party was founded more than sixty years ago. It has never been disbanded. To-day it numbers one million five hundred thousand electors in the States still loyal to the Union. Its recent numerous victories in municipal elections in the Western and Middle States proves its vitality. Within the last ten months it has held State conventions and nominated full Democratic tickets in every free State in the Union. Of no other party opposed to the Republicans, can the same be said.

SHALL THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY BE NOW DISBANDED?

Why should it? Are its ancient PRINCIPLES wrong? What are they? Let its platforms for thirty years speak:

"Resolved, That the American Democracy place their trust in the intelligence, the patriotism, and the discriminating justice of the American people.

"That we regard this as a distinctive feature in our political creed, which we are proud to maintain before the world, as the great moral element in a form of Government springing from and upheld by the popular will; and we contrast it with the creed and practice of Federalism, under whatever name or form, which seeks to palsy the will of the constituent, and which conceives no imposture too monstrous for the popular credulity.

"That the Federal Government is one of limited power, derived *solely* from the CONSTITUTION; and the grants of power made therein ought to be strictly construed by all the departments and agents of the Government; and that it is inexpedient and dangerous to exercise doubtful constitutional powers."

And as explanatory of these the following from Mr. JEFFERSON's first inaugural:

"The support of the STATE GOVERNMENTS in all their rights as the most competent administrations of our domestic concerns and the surest bulwarks against anti-republican tendencies.

"The preservation of the GENERAL GOVERNMENT in its whole constitutional vigor as the sheet-anchor of our peace at home and safety abroad.

"A jealous care of the right of election by the people.

"THE SUPREMACY OF THE CIVIL OVER THE MILITARY AUTHORITY.

"Economy in the public expense, that labor may be lightly burdened.

"The honest payment of our debts and sacred preservation of the public faith.

"FREEDOM OF RELIGION, FREEDOM OF THE PRESS, AND FREEDOM OF PERSON UNDER PROTECTION OF THE HABEUS CORPUS, AND TRIAL BY JURIES IMPARTIALLY SELECTED."

Such, Democrats, are the principles of your party, essential to public liberty and to the stability and wise administration of the Government, alike in peace and war. They are the principles upon which the Constitution and the Union were founded; and under the control of a party which adheres to them, the Constitution would be maintained and the Union could not be dissolved.

Is the POLICY of the Democratic party wrong that it should be disbanded?

Its policy is consistent with its principles, and may be summed up, from the beginning, as follows: The support of liberty as against power; of the people as against their agents and servants; and of State rights as against consolidation and centralized despotism; a simple Government; no public debt; low taxes; no high protective tariff; no general system of internal improvements by Federal authority; no National Bank; hard money for the Federal public dues; no assumption of State debts; expansion of territory; self-government for the Territories, subject only to the Constitution; the absolute compatibility of a union of the States, "part slave and part free;" the admission of new States, with or without slavery, as they may elect; non-interference by the Federal Government with slavery in State and Territory, or in the District of Columbia; and, finally, as set forth in the Cincinnati Platform, in 1856, and reaffirmed in 1860, absolute and eternal "repudiation of ALL SECTIONAL PARTIES AND PLATFORMS concerning domestic slavery which seek to embroil the States and incite to treason and armed resistance to law in the Territories, *and whose avowed purposes, if consummated, must end in CIVIL WAR AND DISUNION.*"

Such was the ancient and the recent policy of the Democratic party, running through a period of sixty years—a policy consistent with the principles of the Constitution, and absolutely essential to the preservation of the Union.

Does the history of the Democratic party prove that it ought to be abandoned? "By their fruits shall ye know them." Sectional parties do not achieve Union triumphs. For sixty years from

the inauguration of Jefferson on the 4th of March, 1801, the Democratic party, with short intervals, controlled the power and the policy of the Federal Government. For forty-eight years out of these sixty, Democratic men ruled the country; for forty-four years and eight months the Democratic policy prevailed. During this period Louisiana, Florida, Texas, New Mexico, and California were successively annexed to our territory, with an area more than twice as large as all the original Thirteen States together. Seventeen new States were admitted under strictly Democratic administrations—one under the Administration of Fillmore. From five millions, the population increased to thirty-one millions. The Revolutionary debt was extinguished. Two foreign wars were successfully prosecuted, with a moderate outlay and a small army and navy, and without the suspension of the habeas corpus; without one infraction of the Constitution; without one usurpation of power; without suppressing a single newspaper; without imprisoning a single editor; without limit to the freedom of press, or of speech in or out of Congress, but in the midst of the grossest abuse of both; and without the arrest of a single "traitor," though the HARTFORD CONVENTION sat during one of the wars, and in the other Senators invited the enemy to "GREET OUR VOLUNTEERS WITH BLOODY HANDS AND WELCOME THEM TO HOSPITABLE GRAVES."

During all this time wealth increased, business of all kinds multiplied, prosperity smiled on every side; taxes were low; wages were high; the North and the South furnished a market for each other's products at good prices; public liberty was secure; private rights undisturbed; every man's house was his castle; the courts were open to all; no passports for travel; no secret police; no spies; no informers; no bastilles; the right to assemble peaceably; the right to petition; freedom of religion, freedom of speech, a free ballot, and a free press; and all this time the Constitution maintained and the Union of the States preserved.

Such were the choice fruits of Democratic principles and policy, carried out through the whole period during which the Democratic party held the power and administered the Federal Government. Such has been the history of that party. It is a Union party for it preserved the Union, by wisdom, peace, and compromise, for more than half a century.

Then neither the ancient principles, the policy, nor the past history of the Democratic party require nor would justify its disbandment.

Is there anything in the present crisis which demands it? The more immediate issue is,

TO MAINTAIN THE CONSTITUTION AS IT IS, AND TO RESTORE THE
UNION AS IT WAS.

To maintain the Constitution is to respect the rights of the States and the liberties of the citizen. It is to adhere faithfully to the very principles and policy which the Democratic party has pro-

fessed for more than half a century. Let its history, and the results, from the beginning, prove whether it has practiced them. We appeal proudly to the record.

The first step towards a restoration of the Union as it was is to maintain the Constitution as it is. So long as it was maintained in fact, and not threatened with infraction in spirit and in letter, actual or imminent, the Union was unbroken.

To restore the Union, it is essential, first, to give assurance to every State and to the people of every section that their rights and liberties and property will be secure within the Union under the Constitution. What assurance so doubly sure as the restoration to power of that ancient, organized, consolidated Democratic party which for sixty years *did* secure the property, rights, and liberties of the States and of the people; and thus did maintain the Constitution and preserve the Union, and with them the multiplied blessings which distinguished us above all other nations?

To restore the Union is to crush out sectionalism North and South. To begin the great work of restoration through the ballot is to KILL ABOLITION. The bitter waters of secession flowed first and are fed still from the unclean fountain of abolition. That fountain must be dried up. Armies may break down the power of the Confederate Government in the South; but the work of restoration can be carried on only through political organization and the ballot in the North and West. In this great work we cordially invite the co-operation of all men of every party, who are opposed to the fell spirit of abolition, and who, in sincerity, desire the Constitution as it is, and the Union as it was. Let the dead past bury its dead. Rally, lovers of the Union, the Constitution, and of Liberty, to the standard of the Democratic party, already in the field and confident of victory. That party is the natural and persistent enemy of abolition. Upon this question its record as a national organization, however it may have been at times with particular men or in particular States, is clear and unquestionable. From the beginning of the anti-slavery agitation to the period of the last Democratic National Convention it has held but one language in regard to it. Let the record speak:

"Resolved, That Congress has no power under the Constitution to interfere with or control the domestic institutions of the several States, and that such States are the sole and proper judges of every thing appertaining to their own affairs not prohibited by the Constitution; that all efforts of the Abolitionists or others made to induce Congress to interfere with questions of slavery, or to take incipient steps in relation thereto, are calculated to lead to the most alarming and dangerous consequences, and that all such efforts have an inevitable tendency to diminish the happiness of the people and endanger the stability and permanency of the Union, and ought not to be countenanced by any friend of our political institutions."

Upon these principles alone, so far as relates to slavery, can the Union as it was be restored; and no other Union, except the UNITY OF DESPOTISM, can be maintained in this country; and this last we will resist, as our fathers did, with our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.

But it is said that you must disband the Democratic party "to support the Government." We answer that the Democratic party has always supported THE GOVERNMENT; and while it was in power preserved the Government in all its vigor and integrity, not by force and arms, but by wisdom, sound policy, and peace. But it never did admit, and never will, that this Administration, or any Administration, is "the Government." It holds, and ever has held, that the Federal Government is the agent of the people of the several States composing the Union; that it consists of three distinct departments—the legislative, the executive, and the judicial—each equally a part of the Government, and equally entitled to the confidence and support of the States and the people; and that it is the duty of every patriot to sustain the several departments of the Government in *the exercise of all the constitutional powers of each which may be necessary and proper for the preservation of the Government in its principles and in its vigor and integrity, and to stand by and defend to the utmost the flag which represents the Government, the Union, and the country.*

In this sense the Democratic party has always sustained, and will now sustain, THE GOVERNMENT against all foes, at home or abroad, in the North or the South, open or concealed, in office or out of office, in peace or in war.

If this is what the Republican party mean by supporting the Government, it is an idle thing to abandon the old and tried Democratic party, which for so many years, and through so many trials supported, preserved, and maintained the Government of the Union. But if their real purpose be to aid the ancient enemies of the Democracy in subverting our present Constitution and form of government, and, under pretence of saving the Union, to erect a strong centralized despotism on its ruins, the Democratic party will resist them as the worst enemy to the Constitution and the Union, and to free government every where.

We do not propose to consider now the causes which led to the present unhappy civil war. A fitter time will come hereafter for such discussion. But we remind you now that COMPROMISE made your Union, and COMPROMISE fifteen months ago would have saved it. Repeated efforts were made at the last session of the Thirty-sixth Congress to this end. At every stage, the great mass of the South, with the whole Democratic party, and the whole Constitutional Union party, of the North and West, united in favor of certain amendments to the Constitution—and chief among them, the well known "CRITTENDEN PROPOSITIONS," which would have averted civil war and maintained the Union. At every stage, all proposed amendments inconsistent with the sectional doctrines of the CHICAGO PLATFORM were strenuously and unanimously resisted and defeated by the Republican party. The "Crittenden Propositions" never received a single Republican vote in either House. For the proof we appeal to the Journals of Congress and to the Congressional Globe.

We scorn to reply to the charge that the Democratic party is opposed to granting aid and support to the Federal Government in maintaining its safety, integrity, and constitutional supremacy, and in favor of disbanding our armies and succumbing to the South. The charge is libellous and false. No man has advocated any such proposition. Democrats recognize it as their duty as patriots to support the Government in all constitutional, necessary, and proper efforts to maintain its safety, integrity, and constitutional authority; but at the same time they are inflexibly opposed to waging war against any of the States or people of this Union, in any spirit of oppression, or for any purpose of conquest or subjugation, or of overthrowing or interfering with the rights or established institutions of any State. Above all, the Democratic party will not support the Administration in any thing which looks or tends to the loss of our political or personal rights and liberties, or a change of our present Democratic form of government.

But no, Democrats, it is not the support of the Government in restoring the Union which the party in power require of you. You are asked to give up your principles, your policy, and your party, and to stand by the Administration in all its acts. Above all, it is demanded of you that you yield at least a silent support to their whole policy, and to withhold all scrutiny into their public conduct of every kind, lest you should "embarrass the Administration." You are thus asked to renounce one of the first principles and the chief security of a Democratic government—*the right to hold public servants responsible to their master, the people; to render the representative accountable to the constituent; the ancient and undoubted prerogative of Americans to canvass public measures and public men.* It is this "high constitutional privilege" which Daniel Webster declared he would "defend and exercise within the House and out of the House, and in all places; *in time of war, in time of peace, and at all times!*" It is a right secured by the Constitution; a right inestimable to the people, and formidable to tyrants only.

If ever there was a time when the existence and consolidation of the Democratic party upon its principles and policy was a vital necessity to public and private liberty, it is now.

Unquestionably the Constitution gives ample power to the several departments of the Government to carry on war, strictly subject to its provisions, and, in case of civil war, with perfect security to citizens of the loyal States. Every act necessary for the safety and efficiency of the Government, and for a complete and most vigorous trial of its strength, is yet wholly consistent with the observance of every provision of that instrument, and of the laws in pursuance of it, if the sole motives of those in power were the suppression of the "rebellion," and no more. And yet the history of the Administration for the twelve months past has been, and continues to be, a history of repeated usurpations of power and of violations of the Constitution, and of the

public and private rights of the citizen. For the proof we appeal to facts too recent to need recital here, and too flagrant and heinous for the calm narrative which we propose. Similar acts were done and a like policy pursued in the threatened war with France in the time of John Adams, and with the same ultimate purpose. But in two or three years the people forced them into an honorable peace with France, rebuked the excesses and abuses of power, vindicated the Constitution, and turned over the Federal Government to the principles and policy of the Democratic party. To the "sober second thought" of the people, therefore, and to the ballot-box, we now appeal when again in like peril with our fathers.

But if every Democrat concurred in the policy of prosecuting the war to the utter subjugation of the South and for the subversion of her State Governments and her institutions, without a Convention of the States, and without an overture for peace, we should just as resolutely resist the disbanding of the Democratic party. It is the only party capable of carrying on a war; it is the only party which has ever conducted a war to a successful issue, and the only party which has done it without abuse of power, without molestation to the rights of any class of citizens, and with due regard to economy. All this it has done; all this, if need be, it is able to do again. If success, then, in a military point of view be required, the Democratic party alone can command it.

To conclude: Inviting all men, without distinction of State, section, or party, who are for the Constitution as it is and the Union as it was, to unite with us in this great work upon terms of perfect equality, we insist that—

The restoration of the Union, whether through peace or by war, demands the continued organization and success of the Democratic party;

The preservation of the Constitution demands it;

The maintenance of liberty and free democratical government demands it;

The restoration of a sound system of internal policy demands it;

Economy and honesty in the public expenditures, now at the rate of near four millions of dollars a day, demand it;

The rapid accumulation of an enormous and permanent public debt demand it—a public debt already one thousand millions of dollars, and equal at the present rate, in three years, to England's debt of a century and a half in growth;

The heavy taxation, direct and indirect, State and Federal, already more than two hundred millions of dollars a year, eating out the substance of the people, augmenting every year, demands it;

Reduced wages, low prices, depression of trade, decay of business, scarcity of work, and impending ruin on every side, demand it;



And, finally, the restoration of the concord, good feeling, and prosperity of former years, demands that the Democratic party shall be maintained and made victorious.

W. A. RICHARDSON, of Illinois.
A. L. KNAPP, of Illinois.
J. C. ROBINSON, of Illinois.
JOHN LAW, of Indiana.
D. W. VOORHEES, of Indiana.
W. ALLEN, of Ohio.
C. A. WHITE, of Ohio.
WARREN P. NOBLE, of Ohio.
GEO. H. PENDLETON, of Ohio.
JAS. R. MORRIS, of Ohio.
C. L. VALLANDIGHAM, of Ohio.
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